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THE HOUSEHOLD - GARDEN CALENDAR

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A radio interview by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Wednesday, April 29, 1936.

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ANNOUNCER:

Continuing our Farm and Home Hour program we have Ruth Van Deman and W. R. Beattie with us again for another of their discussions about good things to eat from the garden. Last week they told us about greens, spring greens, tame and wild. Today they tell me they're going to concentrate on beans and tomatoes for canning. Sure you aren't rushing the season, Miss Van Deman?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

No, not a bit. Mr. Beattie's Garden Calendar and my Household Calendar seem to synchronize perfectly. Now's the time for all good canners and gardeners to get together. Our mail is beginning to bring in canning questions, and yours is full, isn't it Mr. Beattie, of questions about what to grow to put into the cans?

MR. BEATTIE:

Yes, that's right, Miss Van Deman. And I don't need to tell you that canning doesn't improve any products. Unless you put good things into the cans you will not get good things out of them. So I believe in growing the best possible vegetables to can.

Snap beans and tomatoes happen to be two of our most important garden crops or home canning, and right now is the time to plant them in many sections.

Miss Van Deman, I suppose you have your ideals or standards as to what constitutes good snap beans for canning.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, I do, now that you ask me. I don't know that I ever put my standard for beans into words before. Let me see. Well I want a snap bean that snaps. In other words I want the pod to be tender and crisp without any tough strings fraying out when I break it. And if it's a green bean I want it to be a bright green and stay green after it goes into the can. Or if it's a variety of wax beans I want them to have that clear, waxy appearance that the name implies. I want the color to be a good clear, pale yellow. Am I asking too much, Mr. Beattie?

MR. BEATTIE:

No, not a bit too much, Miss Van Deman. I think we can take care of all that. There has been a wonderful improvement in the varieties of garden beans during the past few years. You notice we don't call them string beans any more. Their official name is snap beans, now. But take the old Black Valentine variety. It was a sure enough string bean. Those pods were full of strings and fiber. The name Black Valentine became so firmly fixed in

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people's minds, though, that they kept asking for it. So the seed breeders brought out a new variety known as Black-Valentine Stringless. If you're buying seed of that variety, it's very important to get the kind that has that word "stringless" added to Black Valentine. Then Rust Proof Black Wax is another of the old familiar sorts. But it's admittedly rather tough and stringy and coarse textured. Then there are the Sure-Crop Wax, the Improved Stringless Kidney Wax, and the Brittle Wax. They are all practically stringless and great improvements over the old varieties.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

How about their color after they're canned? Does it hold up?

MR. BEATTIE:

It differs somewhat with the variety. I'll admit it's hard to find perfection on every score in one pod. Among the green varieties the Stringless Green Pod has been one of the most popular for a number of years. And while the pods are stringless they are coarser than some of the still newer varieties and they lose some of their green color in canning. There's a new variety known as Tendergreen that seems to hold its color.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Well, if it lives up to that name Tendergreen it should score high on two counts.

MR. BEATTIE:

Yes, but beside the quality of the pod there's something else to consider about snap beans - that is disease resistance. Stringless Green Refugee has for many years been an important canning variety and while it is free from strings and fiber and has good color it is subject to the attack of the mosaic disease. In 1934 Dr. W. H. Pierce of the University of Idaho introduced a new strain of Refugee which is resistant to the mosaic disease. That same year the U. S. Department of Agriculture introduced a mosaic-resistant stringless green Refugee bean, and so did Dr. J. C. Walker of the University of Wisconsin.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Well, 1934 was evidently a big year in bean history. Is seed obtainable of these new disease-resistant varieties?

MR. BEATTIE:

Yes, a number of the seedsmen carry them.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Mr. Beattie, one more question about beans before we go on to the tomatoes. We figure that it takes about 1-1/2 pounds of raw snap beans to make one quart of canned beans, or one No. 3 can. Suppose a family wants, we'll say, 30 quarts of canned beans, how much would you advise planting?

MR. BEATTIE:

One row 150 feet in length should produce plenty of beans for 30 quarts but it is always best to have a few extra for safety. Early planted beans usually are best for canning, as the pods are more tender early in the season.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Now for the tomatoes. They've been improved too, I've heard.

MR. BEATTIE:

Yes, if anything, the improvement has been even greater in tomatoes than in snap beans. Tomatoes aren't subject to mosaic disease like the bean but they do have a wilt that's even more serious. You might get a fair crop of beans even with mosaic present, but when the wilt strikes tomato plants, that's the end of them.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Have the plant breeders succeeded in developing some wilt-resistant tomatoes then?

MR. BEATTIE:

Yes, Marglobe and Pritchard are both wilt resistant. And in addition they have superior characteristics from the canner's standpoint. Now let's see how they check with your idea of a perfect tomato, Miss Van Deman.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

A perfect tomato? You are making me think today, Mr. Beattie. Well, I would say a perfect tomato for canning should be medium in size and smooth, without any of those queer looking scars and cracks that tomatoes sometimes have. And the color should be a good rich red - the red that means tomato red to me - not a wishy-washy pink. Then I like a rather firm fleshed tomato, so that when you cut it all the juice doesn't run out and carry the seeds with it.

MR. BEATTIE:

Fine, that's my idea exactly. And how about the flavor, should it be mildly acid?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, acid and not too mild to suit me. That tart flavor is one of the things I like best about tomatoes.

MR. BEATTIE:

I agree with you there too. And it goes without saying that the ideal canning tomato must be a strong vigorous grower and produce fairly heavy yields in order to be profitable. When you are growing tomatoes for home canning the question of yield per plant may not be quite as important because there is generally plenty of room in the garden for enough plants to supply all that are needed both for table use and for canning. The Marglobe and Pritchard come up to all these specifications fairly well.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

On that point of how many to plant to produce enough for canning, my figures say that it takes 2-1/2 to 3-1/2 pounds of raw tomatoes for each No. 3 can or each quart of canned tomatoes. And most families use canned tomatoes in so many ways in winter meals that they want plenty on the pantry shelf. Many food budgets call for tomatoes in some form several times a week. Seventy-five to eighty quarts of canned tomatoes is none too many for an average family. That means roughly somewhere between 200 and 300 pounds of tomatoes as they come from the garden - quite a few tomatoes.

MR. BEATTIE:

Estimating 5 pounds of tomatoes per plant - and that is a low yield - you should plant at least 60 plants for canning. In addition you want plenty for summer use and so the average garden should contain at least 100 tomato plants.

Well, Miss Van Deman, I think I've heard you remark at other times and seasons that tomatoes were the easiest of all vegetables to can at home. Does that still hold true?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

It does. They are the one vegetable that can be processed in the boiling water bath just the same way as fruits. That's because they are acid and juicy. And they can be put into glass jars or tin cans.

MR. BEATTIE:

Plain tin, or the sanitary enamel kind?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Either one. Tomatoes aren't fussy. But snap beans are quite a different matter. As you've also heard me remark more than once, Mr. Beattie, and this won't be the last time, snap beans are one of those nonacid vegetables that the home canner needs to be extra particular with. We come right out flat-footed and say that the only safe way is to process them in the steam pressure canner. If that isn't possible, then it's better not to try to can snap beans at home. That's the verdict of the bacteriologists and they seem to know only too well what happens to food inside of cans.

MR. BEATTIE:

Well what about the containers for the beans. Any special kinds necessary?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

No. All kind of glass jars are all right and for the cans, plain tin seems to be the best.

MR. BEATTIE:

By the way, Miss Van Deman, if a family's planning to can a good many vegetables, what size pressure canner would you advise their buying?

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Not less than an 18-quart size. That will hold 5 quart glass jars at a time, or 8 pint jars, or 8 No. 3 tin cans, or 14 No. 2's. We have a lot of letters from people who tell us how they came to grief when they try to use too small a steam pressure outfit for canning. It's too difficult to keep the pressure even in one of these small cookers, and the result is that the food isn't properly sterilized and then it goes bad and they have to throw it away.

Also whatever the size of the canner, be sure that the pressure gauge and safety valve are working properly.

MR. BEATTIE:

I say amen to that. Last summer I borrowed a pressure canner from a neighbor and when we started to use it, I noticed that the pressure on the gauge soon ran up to 20 pounds but that the safety valve which was set at 10 pounds had not released. I investigated and found that it was stuck.

MISS VAN DEMAN:

Yes, the pressure gauge, the safety valve, the petcock - every part of a pressure canner has to be working right to be sure that you are getting the temperature you need inside the canner. That's what really counts. Because it's that heat, forced through the food in the cans, that sterilizes it and enables it to keep as long as the containers are sealed airtight. So it's important to check up on every detail of a steam pressure canner before the canning season opens.

ANNOUNCER:

Well, Miss Van Deman, we let you have the first word and now you had the last word in this talk about beans and tomatoes.

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